

Happy to Help

By Amie Jane Leavitt
(Based on a true story)

"When we're helping, we're happy"
(Children's Songbook, 198).

William leaned his rake against the side of the house and plopped down on the grass. Raking the leaves was hard work, but he and his sisters, Chloé and Amelia, were finally done. Way up above the tall Alps mountains he could see a plane fly by. He wondered where it was going.

William loved his little town near the French-Swiss border. People from all over the world visited here. He thought about the places he wanted to go, the people he could meet, and the adventures he might have someday.

He was startled out of his daydream by the *crunch, crunch, crunch* of footsteps in the yard next door.

"Pat must be getting ready to rake his leaves," William said to his sisters. "I'm sure glad we're done with ours."

"Me too," Chloé said.

But if raking leaves was hard for three people, it must be really hard for one! William thought. Pat's wife, Pam, had just had surgery, so Pat would have to rake his leaves all by himself.

Mum always said, "When we're helping, we're happy!" William thought that probably meant helping Pat, even though they were tired and had already raked a whole yard.

William looked over at Chloé and Amelia, who were building tiny twig houses in the grass. "Should we go help Pat?" he asked. "We can help him finish pretty fast."

Chloé and Amelia agreed and followed William. Even Samuel, who was only two, toddled behind them.

"Want some help?" Amelia asked as they walked around the bushes into Pat's yard.

"I sure would! But you kids have been raking all afternoon. I bet you're tired."

"That's OK," William said. "We want to help. After all, when we're helping, we're happy!"

As they worked, Pat told the kids fun stories from his life. Pat was from India, but he had lived all over Asia and Africa.

After the leaves were bagged, William looked over and noticed the apples scattered around the two tall apple trees in Pat's yard. Their work wasn't quite done yet. William stooped down and started gathering apples. He sorted the rotten ones from the good ones as he went along. Chloé and Amelia ran over to put the apples in piles.

Pat rolled his old green wheelbarrow out from the shed. "Let's put the rotten ones in here. Then you can take the good ones home with you."

"That's OK, Pat. We don't need to take your apples," William said.

"I want to give them to you," Pat said. "After all, when I'm giving, I'm happy!"

That night during dinner, the children told Mum and Dad how much fun they'd had helping Pat and hearing his stories.

Suddenly William had an idea. "I know what we can do with the apples he gave us!" He jumped up and grabbed a copy of the *Friend* from the bookshelf. "I think Pat and Pam would really like this," William said, turning to a recipe for apple cake. "And like Pat said today, when we're giving, we're happy!"

"Let's make a cake for our other neighbors too!" Chloé said.

William grinned. He thought about all the people he could meet and the exciting stories he could hear. And all that through just a bit of kindness. And a bit of cake. ♦

The author lives in Utah, USA.

Turn the page for a recipe to go with this story!

